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## บทความวิจัย

- แนวคิดเรื่องมนุษย์คือสวรรค์ (In Nae Ch'on) และอุดมการณ์ทางจริยธรรม:  
บทวิเคราะห์คำสอนของทงฮักและช็อนโดกโยในฐานะศาสนาใหม่ในเกาหลี  
ถาปกรณ์ กำเนิดศิริ 1-30
- ตลาดแรงงานภาครัฐกับความไม่สอดคล้องทางการศึกษาในประเทศไทย:  
การวิจัยแบบผสมผสานวิธีการกรณีศึกษาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ  
กันยปริณ ทองสามสี, อีสระ ทองสามสี 31-54
- ความแตกต่างของแรงจูงใจในการเล่นเกมนของผู้เล่นเกมออนไลน์ในกลุ่มต่าง ๆ  
ปรมัตต์ แสงสีสด, แสงเดือน ยอดอัญมณีวงศ์ 55-70
- ปัจจัยที่มีความสัมพันธ์ต่อภาวะหมดไฟของพนักงานธนาคารของรัฐแห่งหนึ่ง  
พัทธนันท์ เยาดำ, เกวลิน ศีลพิพัฒน์ 71-90
- ความสุขกับพฤติกรรมการช่วยเหลือในที่ทำงาน: ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสุขภาวะตามแบบจำลอง  
PERMA และพฤติกรรมการเป็นสมาชิกที่ดีขององค์กรในบริบทมหาวิทยาลัยไทย  
ฮานานมุฮิบบะตุตติณ นอจิ, อาซิมะห์ ดอเลา, จุฑามาศ เสถียรพันธ์,  
สรินฎา ปุติ, บุรินทร์ สหะวีริยะ 91-108
- การสั่งลาและบทบาทของบทสั่งลาในบทละครเรื่องรามเกียรติ์พระราชนิพนธ์  
ในพระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธยอดฟ้าจุฬาโลกมหาราช  
วรุณญา อัจฉริยะบดี 109-124

## บทความวิชาการ

- เพลง “ปู่ไข่ไก่หลง”: วิเคราะห์เชิงจิตวิทยาและสุนทรียภาพ  
ประภาศ ปานเจียง 125-138

Public Labour Market and Educational Mismatch in Thailand:  
Mixed-Method Study in Case of Community Development Specialist  
ตลาดแรงงานภาครัฐกับความไม่สอดคล้องทางการศึกษาในประเทศไทย:  
การวิจัยแบบผสมผสานวิธีการกรณีศึกษาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ

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Abstract

Thailand has a total of fifty-four higher education institutions offering sixty-two programs in community development and social development within the field of social sciences and humanities. Graduates from these programs typically specialize in the government sector as Community Development Specialist (CDS). A recent study aimed to assess the mismatch in the public labour market for CDS and explain the performance issues in this field. The study used a mixed-method approach, analyzing official records of CDS appointments for the purpose of quantitative analysis while for the qualitative analysis, interviews with CDS and the Head of the Community Development District Office were conducted. The results revealed that most of the 869 Community Developers placed/appointed during 2019 and 2021 possessed educational backgrounds in science and technology, indicating a horizontal mismatch in their skills and the demands of the profession. Interviews emphasized the wide range of talents needed to become a successful CDS and highlighted the importance of aligning community development policies with government initiatives. The study suggests that course designers in the field of community development should create a curriculum integrating knowledge and skills from various disciplines to enhance the proficiency of students pursuing these studies in Thailand, hence improving their job prospects.

**Keywords:** Community Development Specialist, Educational Mismatch, Public Labour Market

### บทคัดย่อ

สถาบันอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยได้เปิดสอนหลักสูตรที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการพัฒนาชุมชน/พัฒนาสังคมซึ่งจัดอยู่ในกลุ่มสาขาสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์รวม 54 สถาบัน 62 หลักสูตร หากพิจารณาตำแหน่งงานของภาครัฐที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยตรงคือ นักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประเมินระดับความไม่สอดคล้องระหว่างระดับการศึกษาและอาชีพในตำแหน่งนักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ และเพื่ออธิบายปรากฏการณ์การปฏิบัติงานของนักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการด้วยวุฒิการศึกษาที่หลากหลาย ใช้ระเบียบวิธีการวิจัยรูปแบบผสมผสานวิธีการ รวบรวมและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทั้งจากแนวคิดทฤษฎี งานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้อง ผลการบรรจุแต่งตั้ง และการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ปฏิบัติงานในตำแหน่งนักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ และพัฒนาการอำเภอ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าระหว่างปี 2562-2564 ผู้บรรจุและแต่งตั้งในตำแหน่งนักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการนั้นส่วนใหญ่สำเร็จการศึกษาในสาขาวิชาวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี ผลการวิเคราะห์มิติความไม่สอดคล้องทางการศึกษาและอาชีพในตลาดแรงงานพบว่า ผู้ได้รับการบรรจุส่วนใหญ่มีวุฒิการศึกษาไม่สอดคล้องตามแนวราบ ขณะที่ผลการสัมภาษณ์พบว่าการทำงานในตำแหน่งนักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการต้องใช้ทักษะหลายด้าน อีกทั้งนโยบายด้านการพัฒนาชุมชนมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงไปตามสถานการณ์ในประเทศ บุคลากรมีคุณวุฒิที่หลากหลายสามารถสนับสนุนการทำงานให้สัมฤทธิ์ผลตามนโยบายของรัฐได้ดีกว่า ดังนั้น ผู้รับผิดชอบหลักสูตรที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการพัฒนาชุมชน/พัฒนาสังคมควรพัฒนาหลักสูตรโดยบูรณาการศาสตร์ร่วมกับสาขาอื่นเพื่อเพิ่มทักษะที่หลากหลายและเพิ่มโอกาสในการสอบแข่งขันในตำแหน่งดังกล่าวแก่ผู้เรียนสาขาการพัฒนาชุมชน/พัฒนาสังคมในประเทศไทย

**คำสำคัญ:** ความไม่สอดคล้องทางการศึกษา, ตลาดแรงงานภาครัฐ, นักวิชาการพัฒนาชุมชนปฏิบัติการ

## Introduction

Investing in education is widely acknowledged as beneficial for society, as it has immediate and indirect positive effects. However, developing nations face a dilemma in this respect. The term "quality of labour" refers to an individual's skills and educational level. People who have completed higher education often struggle to find employment that matches their qualifications. The knowledge and skills gained through higher education often do not align with the requirements of the job market Okolie, Igwe, Nwosu, Eneje, and Mlanga (2020). Alternatively, individuals may find themselves in jobs that do not match their level of education and abilities, or the labour market may demand specific skills that workers lack. These discrepancies between educational qualifications and labour market needs are commonly referred to as labour market and educational mismatches. Satimanon (2017) explains that developing countries face the issue of labour quality not meeting the demands of the industrial sector due to the inadequate education provided by educational institutions. As a result, workers possess skills that do not meet employers' expectations. This mismatch between the skills of the workforce and requirements of the industrial sector leads to unemployment and undermines the connection between education and human resource development, as educational institutions fail to meet the needs of the industrial sector.

The National Statistical Office, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (2021) observed that a significant number of graduates with higher education degrees were working in fields unrelated to their area of study. Furthermore, the number of graduates who work in jobs that do not align with their educational background is steadily rising. Specifically, almost 60 percent of individuals who are younger than 38 years old do not pursue careers in the field they obtained their degree in, and this pattern is on the rise. In their study of Pholphirul, Khong-ngern, and Thowladda (2016) examined the phenomenon of educational mismatch and its repercussions on the job market in Thailand. The Thai labour market exhibits a significant degree of educational mismatch. There are discrepancies in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical mismatch is particularly prevalent among graduates specializing in social sciences. While Satimanon (2017) addresses issues and remedies regarding labour quality that deviate from the Thai industry's requirements, there is a lack of available research that examines job positions in the public sector.

During in the 2018–2019 academic year, Thailand achieved a cumulative count of 325, 824 and 312,141 individuals who successfully earned their bachelor's degrees. Notably, almost 70 percent of graduates specialized in social sciences and humanities, with sciences and technology, and health sciences being the next most popular fields of study. The consistent findings indicate that a significant proportion of these graduates ultimately do not pursue employment in their respective disciplines. Senkrua (2015) and Pholphirul, Khong-ngern, and Thowladda (2016) conducted a study that supports the assertion of an educational mismatch in the field of social sciences. The researcher's main goal is to foster the growth and development of individuals who have successfully completed community development/social development programs.

These programs are available at 54 higher education institutions and comprise a total of 62 courses (Office of the Civil Service Commission [OCSC], 2021). Based on Higher Education Information, the Office of the Higher Education Commission (2021), provides a grand total of 6,589 individuals who successfully completed their studies in the specified disciplines in the academic year 2018–2019.

Graduates of the community development/social development degree can pursue positions as "Community Development Specialist" within the Department of Community Development (DCD), Ministry of Interior. The researchers have consistently conducted follow-ups on the placement examination. For instance, over the period of 2017–2019, the recruitment and appointment of community development academics revealed that the majority of candidates who participated in the competitive exam have bachelor's degrees in science, engineering, or public health. The study conducted in 2014 on the recruitment and appointment of CDS revealed that the most often attained qualifications at the undergraduate level were in the fields of political science, public administration, and law. In 2019, the Community Development Department reopened applications for posts in the science field (I. Tongsamsi, & K. Tongsamsi, 2019, July 12-13; 2016, May 26-29). On the other hand, graduates of community development/social development programs experience a comparatively low rate of employment such as Prince of Songkla University provides a Bachelor of Arts program in the discipline of Community Studies. There were work opportunities available throughout the academic years 2018-2019, with employment rates of 22.73%, and 12.86%, respectively. The percentages for the Social Development fields in the Bachelor of Arts program were 38.89%, and 23.53%, respectively (Policy, Strategy, and Planning Division, Prince of Songkla University, 2021; 2020).

The researchers intend to conduct a comprehensive investigation in order to provide valuable information to all fifty-four Thai higher education institutions. The examination of educational mismatch adopts the viewpoint of the individuals responsible for the community development program, which seeks to produce graduates who can contribute to the field of development. This study aims to analyze the outcomes of the civil service test for the community development academic position from 2019 to 2021. It specifically focuses on graduates of the social development/community development program and compares their performance with that of individuals with different educational qualifications. The research examines the perspectives of both practitioners and supervisors regarding the challenges and benefits of working in roles that require varied educational backgrounds. Additionally, the research offers recommendations for cultivating essential competencies among social development/community development graduates seeking employment as CDS during this period of change.

### Objectives

1. To assess the level of educational mismatch in the position of Community Development Specialist.
2. To elucidate the professional role of a Community Development Specialist with diverse educational field.

## Literature Review

### Definition of educational mismatch and its impacts

Educational mismatch pertains to the discrepancy between an individual's educational attainment and the qualifications demanded by their work or occupation. This disparity can be categorized into three distinct forms and may have diverse ramifications on both the individual and the entire economy (Gaeta, Lavadera, & Pastore, 2022; Salas Velasco, 2021; Vecchi, Savic, & Romiti, 2021; International Labour Organization, 2020; Veselinović, Mangafić, & Turulja, 2020; Morsy & Mukasa, 2019; McGuinness, Montt, 2017; Pouliakas, & Redmond, 2017; Pholpirul, Khong-ngern, & Thowladda, 2016; Pala, Bichanga, & Atambo, 2015).

1. Vertical Mismatch refers to situations where workers possess education levels that are either greater or lower than the educational requirements for a particular occupation or position. The focus of this research is on achieving a higher degree of qualification than the required work position. The announcement for the CDS position explicitly specifies that a bachelor's degree is a mandatory requirement for applicants. Nevertheless, applicants have the potential to achieve a greater level of education than that. One reason master's degree graduates have to seek employment in bachelor's degree roles is that educational institutions overproduce graduates with advanced degrees or abilities. Additionally, personal ideals and the desire to earn an advanced degree may motivate them.

Multiple studies suggest that individuals with lower educational attainment are less likely to be employed, while possessing job-relevant skills, and tend to experience infrequent work-related difficulties. Individuals with excessive educational qualifications face significant challenges, such as the wage penalty (Gaeta, Lavadera, & Pastore, 2022; International Labour Organization, 2020; Morsy & Mukasa, 2019; McGuinness, Pouliakas, & Redmond, 2017; Montt, 2017; Dolton & Vignoles, 2000). Vecchi, Savic, and Romiti (2021) provide clear evidence that these individuals earn approximately 31-35 percent less in wages compared to those employed in direct sectors. Job dissatisfaction, as evidenced by studies conducted by the International Labour Organization (2020), Morsy and Mukasa (2019), and Korpi and Tåhlin (2009), leads to reduced productivity in the workplace. There is a significant level of work-related stress, and using creativity at a minimal level at work (Montt, 2017; Pholpirul, Khong-ngern, & Thowladda, 2016) is an indication of an impending brain drain phenomenon (Ziberi, 2020).

2. Horizontal Mismatch or Field of Study Mismatch arises when workers graduate in a field of study that does not align with the demands of the labour market or when the employment position is not directly relevant to their primary subject of study. The education system may either overproduce or underproduce graduates in certain fields, causing this phenomenon. Consequently, there is an oversupply of graduates in certain fields and a shortage of others. As a result, those who have completed their studies may need to pursue different professional paths in order to secure employment in unrelated industries, with employability being their primary goal. Salas-Velasco (2021) in Spain observed this phenomenon globally, revealing that individuals who solely pursue degrees in medicine, nursing, and veterinary medicine ultimately

secure employment within their respective disciplines. Regarding individuals who have graduated from different disciplines, this course focuses on enhancing general abilities rather than occupation-specific talents. Albert, Davia, and Legazpe's (2023) study found that 29.1% of Spanish higher education graduates had a horizontal mismatch. Another factor may be that graduates opt to pursue studies in disciplines where they lack expertise or genuine enthusiasm. Consequently, they end up seeking employment in roles unrelated to their academic qualifications.

The mismatch between workers' qualifications and their job assignments leads to a wage penalty compared to those who are employed in their respective fields of study (Vecchi, Savic, & Romiti, 2021; Bol, Eller, van de Werfhorst, & DiPrete, 2019). The study conducted by Veselinović, Mangafić and Turulja (2020) revealed that a significant proportion, ranging from 13% to 15% of individuals had diminished earnings, low job satisfaction (International Labour Organization, 2020). McGuinness, Whelan, and Bergin (2016) recommended including practical lessons in teaching and learning across all disciplines to decrease this occurrence, whereas Bol, Eller, van de Werfhorst, and DiPrete (2019) suggested designing a professional route from the time of studying. Albert, Davia, and Legazpe (2023) proposed using employment mobility as a strategy at work.

3. Double Mismatch refers to a situation when workers possess greater qualifications than what is required for their job positions and their fields of study do not align with their line of work. For example, someone with a master's degree in education works as a salesperson with a bachelor's degree. The worker holds a responsible job or role that does not align with the field in which they obtained their degree. In addition, they possess educational credentials that exceed the minimum educational requirements for the position. The combination of both vertical and horizontal inconsistencies, known as a double mismatch, can result in more significant operational issues. Paying workers in a group less than their educational qualifications results in over-skilling. Consequently, these workers are unable to fully utilize their knowledge in their respective fields of study to support their work, resulting in job dissatisfaction and ultimately leading to resignations.

However, the International Labour Organization (2020) found that a person can be simultaneously overqualified and underskilled. This often happens when the field of education does not correspond to the field of occupation. When examining the percentage of individuals engaged in labour mismatch among the three categories, variations are observed across different regions. For example, Sam (2020), who earned a bachelor's degree from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, observed a maximum vertical mismatch of 35.43 percent, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Number and percentage of graduates working in educational match and mismatch in Cambodia

Category	Number	Percent
Match	1,553	49.79
Overeducation or Vertical Mismatch	1,105	35.43
Horizontal Mismatch	1,037	33.25
Double Mismatch	576	18.47

Source: Sam, 2020

**Table 2** Number and percentage of graduates working in educational match and mismatch in Spain

Category	Number	Percent
Match	12,387	66.38
Overeducation or Vertical Mismatch	1,752	9.24
Horizontal Mismatch	1,379	7.39
Double Mismatch	3,169	16.98

Source: Salas-Velasco (2021)

### Roles and Duties of CDS

The OCSC (2009) and DCD (2019a) mandate that CDS have four distinct job descriptions. The operational aspect involves studying and evaluating community development progress, planning, and facilitating people's inclusion. The planning aspect involves conducting comprehensive studies and research to enhance community resilience and promote local economy stability. The information systems aspect involves researching and creating policies for development, proposing principles for fostering community potential, establishing measures and criteria, and managing knowledge dissemination. The planning aspect involves conscientious work planning, facilitating coordination among team members and external stakeholders, and offering guidance and suggestions on community development. The service aspect involves delivering services to development partners, individuals, community leaders, groups, and organizations. These roles are crucial for fostering community development and ensuring the stability and sustainability of the local economy.

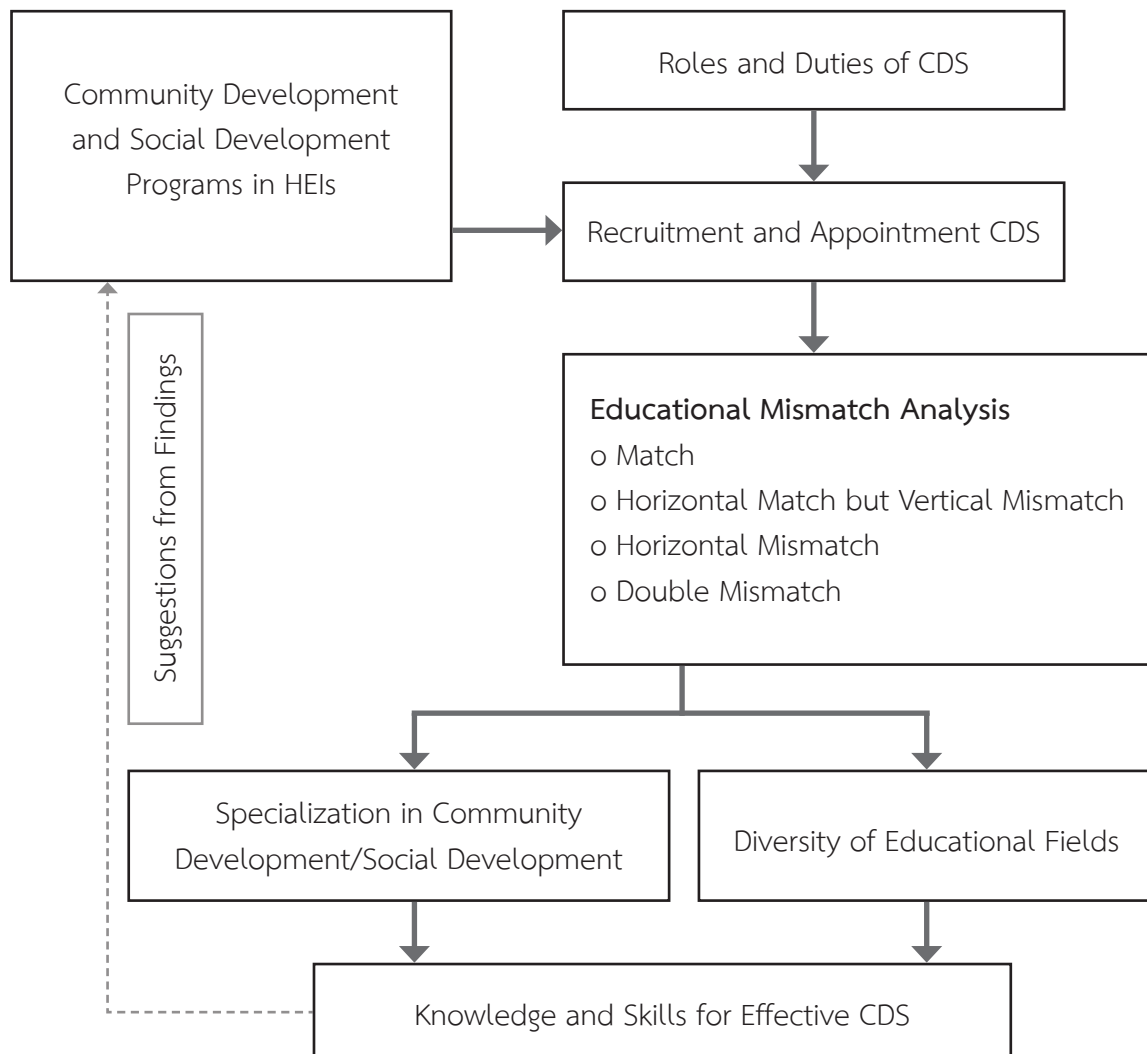
Regarding the aforementioned responsibilities and obligations of the CDS, proficiency in community/social development is an essential ability that graduates in this sector should possess. There are no scientifically significant responsibilities or any direct involvement with health science.

### **Recruitment and Appointment CDS during 2019-2021**

The Community Development Department (2019a) has published details on the application procedure for competitive exams to recruit candidates for government posts as CDS. The department set the application period from June 20 to July 10, 2019. The eligibility criteria for applicants are as applicants must possess a bachelor's degree or an equivalent certification in any academic discipline. Furthermore, candidates must successfully complete Part A of the OCSC's general knowledge and ability examination at the bachelor's degree level or higher. On September 30, 2019, the DCD (2019b) announced that 1,414 individuals had successfully registered after clearing a competitive examination to become CDS staff in government service. The list of names is valid for two years, expiring on September 30, 2021. Selected individuals were compensated with a salary ranging from 15,000 to 16,500 baht.

The DCD has commenced the recruitment process for the open positions from the pool of candidates who have successfully cleared the competitive examination between 2019 and 2021. The Community Development Institute, acting upon the recruitment request from the DCD, organizes training programs. The term "Pre-Community Development Specialist" refers to the training and preparation given to probationary CDS personnel in order to equip them for their official duties. The objective is to provide the trainees with knowledge and understanding of their duties and obligations, promote a set of beliefs, and follow the principles and procedures of community development as the guiding framework for their work. For a total of 40 days, including 23 days of academic and evaluative sessions and 17 days of practical training (DCD, 2019c), the schedule expects the trainees to maintain a positive attitude and exhibit appropriate behavior while working with the community. The department provides instruction to the first group of CDS candidates who meet the requirements for entry into the next competitive exam. The program took place from November 14 to December 23, 2019. The program consisted of theoretical and academic training, as specified by the Civil Service Commission, at the Community Development College located in Bang Lamung District, Chonburi Province. Additionally, the program provided participants with hands-on training in the field of learning development, where they engaged in practical experiences, performed real tasks, and most importantly had the opportunity to consume food and rest. All CDS lived in a certified household that has fully embraced and experienced the way of life of the populace in Ubon Ratchathani Province.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Research Conceptual Framework

### Research Methodology

This study employs the mixed method, specifically the explanatory sequential design, which involves the integration of two research approaches. It begins with the collection of quantitative data, followed by the collection of qualitative data.

#### Phase I Quantitative Study

The initial phase involves data collection and quantitative data analysis to address the research objective, which is to assess the level of mismatch between education and occupation in the labour market. Researchers conducted a case study on candidates vying for the CDS position. In this stage of the research, the researchers utilized secondary data from the announcement of the competition, which included information on the candidates who took the competition to be appointed as CDS. The total number of candidates was 1,414. Additionally,

the researchers used data from the appointment of candidates as CDS during 2019-2021, which amounted to 869 individuals. This group of individuals was considered the population for analysis to evaluate the level of mismatch between education and occupation in the labour market. This assessment utilizes the appropriate method of objective measure or job analysis (JA) (Sellami, Verhaes, & Van Trier, 2018). The method considers the specific qualifications of the competitors' undergraduate degrees and compares them to the standards set for the operational community development officer position by the OCSC (2009). These standards encompass four dimensions: operation, planning, coordination, and service.

Researchers conduct an analysis to assess the level of match and mismatch between education and occupation requirements in the labour market. There are four distinct categories of labour, which are as follows:

1) The term "educational match" refers to individuals who have successfully passed a competitive examination and possess a bachelor's degree in a variety of fields, including urban development, community management, community studies, home and community, social development, and social development management.

2) The term "vertical mismatch" refers to the situation where individuals who pass the competitive test for item 1) hold bachelor's degrees in many fields and possess educational qualities that surpass bachelor's degrees in all areas of study.

3) The term "horizontal mismatch" refers to the circumstance where an applicant, who has successfully finished a competitive exam, holds a bachelor's degree in a subject that is unrelated to the one indicated in item 1).

4) The term "double mismatch" refers to an applicant who has passed the competitive examination and possesses educational qualifications that are unrelated to community/social development and higher than the required level, it indicates that they hold a bachelor's degree in a field different from item 1) and have educational qualifications surpassing a bachelor's degree in all areas of study.

The table presents an analysis that evaluates the degree of disparity between education and occupation levels across the four types of labour marketplaces.

**Table 3** Assessment of the educational mismatch

The competitors have educational qualifications higher than undergraduate level in all fields of study	The competitors have a bachelor's degree in community development	
	Yes	No
No	Match	Horizontal mismatch
Yes	Vertical mismatch	Double mismatch

The data analysis was conducted using the statistical software Jamovi (R Core Team, 2021; The jamovi project, 2021). The statistical measures used include frequency, percentage, mean, minimum, and maximum values.

### **Phase II Qualitative Study**

The results of quantitative research led to the design of qualitative research, specifically a study of the appropriate educational qualifications for CDSs. This study utilized phenomenological research methodology, which encompasses a sequence of research steps as follows:

#### **Key Informants**

Key informants refer to the individuals who have been successfully recruited as CDS by the DCD during 2019-2021, totaling 869 people, as stated in the announcement regarding the registration and cancellation of candidates for competitive examinations for the appointment of personnel in the position of CDS on September 30, 2019. The researchers selected a group of eight individuals to serve as data producers, following the guidelines set by Creswell (2013) and those of the Head of Community Development District Office for three persons. This is saturated with information.

The researchers established criteria for inclusion in CDS as follows:

- 1) On September 30, 2019, an official declaration designated an individual as the CDS.
- 2) A candidate for this position at CDS must possess a minimum of one year of relevant work experience in a role that aligns with the research objectives, up until the date of the interview.
- 3) Researchers classify the characteristics of volunteers (data providers) into three groups in order to obtain answers that align with the research objective 2. We divide these groups into (1) four individuals who have completed their science and technology (Sc1, Sc2, Sc3, Sc4). (2) Two individuals graduated in the field of social sciences (not related to community development or social development) (So1, So2). (3) Two individuals earned their degrees in fields related to community or social development (CD1, CD2).
- 4) The researchers initially contacted the target group of CDS via telephone or email, briefed them on the researchs topic and goals, and sought permission to record the talk for accuracy. Then, we employed a code to protect the interviewee's identity, discarding it once the study concluded. We kept the volunteer data anonymous and only included it in a general research summary. We limit the use of volunteers to academic purposes, exposing them to minimal risk. Volunteers for this study project must participate voluntarily, with the option to withdraw at any time. The researchers conducted interviews outside of regular business hours, providing volunteers with a minimum of one day to determine whether to participate in the project.
- 5) Volunteers who agreed to take part in the researchs project were interviewed by the researchers at the designated time, with each interview lasting 30-40 minutes.

Then, the researchers contacted the Head of Community Development District Office to schedule an interview with the role and duties of developers.

Criteria for exclusion CDS as follows:

- 1) An individual with less than one year of work experience in their current position.
- 2) Researchers first contacted a CDS via telephone or email, but she declined to contribute data for the study project.
- 3) A CDS that refuses to answer researchers' phone calls during scheduled appointments (researchers interpret this as voluntary withdrawal).
- 4) A CDS resigns after gaining employment.

### **Research Instrument**

The development of research tools involved the use of semi-structured interview formats. These interviews aimed to assess the main responsibilities and roles of CDS as designated by DCD and OCSC. Additionally, they provide guidelines for practitioners to carry out their duties. Three experts evaluated the validity of the interview content.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The researchers conducted pilot testing of interview protocols, conducted telephone interviews with each informant, and recorded data either through notetaking or voice recording equipment. We employed an inductive methodology to examine the data obtained from the interviews, with specific emphasis on the perspectives expressed by the participants. and to enhance trustworthiness by checking members. Next, we carried out a narrative analysis, closely examining the data in the documents and considering the environmental context in which we collected it. The researchers employed a triangulation technique to corroborate and document the data. Subsequently, the researchers provided the participants with the examined data for verification. In addition, we analyzed the task's attributes and different DCD programs.

### **Ethics of Research**

This research project has been ethically approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, with the record number PSU.PN. 2-060/64.

### **Results**

#### **Level of educational mismatch in the position of Community Development Specialist**

The competition examiner's lists comprise a total of 1,414 individuals. The DCD appointed a total of 869 personnel on 11 occasions from November 2019 to August 2021. The majority of CDS were female, with an average age of 33.30 years. The majority of respondents possessed a bachelor's degree in Science, Engineering, or Public Health, as indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4** General information of CDS (N = 869)

Information	Number	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	362	41.66
Female	507	58.34
<b>Age groups</b>		
Under 30 years old	258	29.69
30 - 34 years old	257	29.57
35 years old	354	40.74
<b>Bachelor's degree qualifications of candidates who have passed the competitive exam*</b>		
Science/Engineering/Public Health	350	40.28
Political Science/Public Administration/Law	275	31.65
Business Administration/ Management/Economics/Communication Arts	127	14.61
Community Development/Social Development	39	4.14
Social Sciences (except community development/social development fields)	36	4.49
Humanities/Linguistics	32	3.68
Education/Education	10	1.15

\*Consideration is based solely on the bachelor's degree.

The assessment results for the educational mismatch in the CDS position have identified four distinct groups. The first category comprises people who violate a horizontal mismatch, with 83.08% possessing educational qualifications that tend not to be immediately relevant to their professional domain. The second group, referred to as a "double mismatch," consists of persons whose educational qualifications do not correspond to either a vertical or horizontal approach. Among this group, 12.43% possess higher qualifications than what is necessary for their current job position. The third category, which represents a mere 4.03% of persons, comprises those who have passed the recruitment examination with educational degrees that directly align with their job needs. We can classify the final group as a horizontal match, albeit with a vertical mismatch. This is due to the fact that the candidates who successfully completed the examination possess a bachelor's degree that is in line with the employment position, but they also possess a master's degree that is not in line with the job position. The mismatch was observed in just four instances. Consult Table 5 for additional information.

**Table 5** Number and percentage of graduates working in educational match and mismatch\*  
(N = 869)

Category	Number	Percent
Match	35	4.03
Horizontal Match but Vertical Mismatch	4	0.46
Horizontal Mismatch	722	83.08
Double Mismatch	108	12.43

\* Consider both undergraduate degrees and higher qualifications.

### Elucidation the Professional Role of CDS with Educational Field

The interview results reflect intriguing and diverse data, as follows:

Individuals who have successfully completed their studies in community/social development have a strong advantage in that they receive both theoretical and practical training during their education. Additionally, they have prior experience working with community development organizations through internships. In interviews, graduates confirmed this issue.

"Developers who have direct experience in community development and have experience in using/accessing development data, such as essential data and community-level data, are able to work more effectively according to the systems of the DCD. Additionally, they can provide guidance to colleagues from other disciplines. Furthermore, when they are in the field, they can immediately apply community development theories." (Sc1)

"If the community developer is completed directly, then one would know from studying that developers need to be on-site and already know who to coordinate with in the community. Meanwhile, they know how to organize a community forum and what needs to be done." (Sc4)

While CDS from the field of community development/social development shares a perspective that is consistent with the aforementioned viewpoints, they also apply this perspective to the challenges associated with the civil service test for the CDS position.

"Upon the successful completion of my community development degree, I have promptly utilized my acquired knowledge in my position as a Community Developer. Students in this program have gained extensive knowledge of community development processes. However, there is a scarcity of community development graduates that successfully pass the CDS position exam, particularly Section A of the Civil Service Examination. The DCD ought to consider accepting individuals from all academic disciplines to achieve the desired outcome." (CD2)

Meanwhile, the interviewer adopts a more comprehensive approach to analyzing the phenomenon of collaborative work among colleagues from various fields. They compare the distinctions not only among individuals engaged in the Sciences but also among those in the Social Sciences.

"CDS with a scientific background have less proficiency in public speaking compared to those with a social science background in the early stages. However, as they gain more field

experience, their skills improve. Everyone must learn and adapt, eventually being able to perform equally well." (Sc1)

CDS from other fields confirmed that they can apply the knowledge gained while studying to their work as well. For example, a graduate of Political Science said:

"The fundamental knowledge from the field of political science, which is 'leadership'. This discipline can be applied to community development in practice by coordinating with community leaders, such as village heads, subdistrict headman, and local government officials." (So1)

A community developer in the field of community public health stated that.

"During the learning process in university, various tools are used to study communities, such as the use of nine tools for community study, community development theories, and fieldwork with communities. This is similar to studying the curriculum for community/social development. Working in community development allows for the immediate application of these educational tools. Additionally, there has been active participation in data collection and exploration of essential information within the community, resulting in partial knowledge of community development." (Sc1)

A CDS in the field of Food Science and Technology stated that.

"The knowledge gained from the curriculum used directly in community development is the development of OTOP products, which helps advise residents on product development, processing, and food preservation. The younger generation, familiar with platforms like LINE and Facebook for communication, can apply this knowledge to develop online sales of products and provide instruction on product photography and page creation. This greatly benefits the community, as most of the workforce consists of elderly individuals who are not proficient in using technology. Therefore, the role of a developer is to supplement and enhance the abilities of the local residents." (Sc2)

A developer in the field of Engineering stated that.

"Although I did not study community development, once I passed the exam, the department provided a training program for newly recruited personnel to learn together. This program emphasizes practical training, which instills confidence in job performance." (Sc3)

This response addresses the importance of acquiring a degree in community/social development and the corresponding subjects in CDS. We can categorize the findings into two branches: "specialization" and "diversity of qualifications." There is compelling evidence that strongly supports the idea that qualifications in the sector demand a diverse range of capabilities.

"It is advisable to recruit graduates from various fields, from the experience of working together for over a year, it has been found that everyone performs well. Even those who graduated in community/social development field tend to perform better initially." (CD1)

"Community development is the process of developing individuals, which can be done in various ways. Therefore, regardless of their academic background, CDS can use their knowledge to help individuals development. The key characteristics of CDS are having a public spirit, a desire to help the community, and dedicating time to benefiting the community. They inspire

the community to strive for self-sufficiency, independent of government funding. Sometimes, community development requires being present in the field until late hours. When community members see government officials coming to assist them, it motivates them to work." (Sci2)

"The organization (Community Development Office) should be a collective of individuals with diverse skills and abilities, as the work they do encompasses various types, in order to support collaboration and mutual encouragement." (So2)

According to the Head of Community Development District Office, it is advisable to recruit graduates from various fields due to the diverse nature of community development projects, which depend on the policies of the DCD. During the period when the DCD promoted the Khok Nong Na Model project (the concept of land development to maximize utility under the philosophy of sufficiency economy), it was necessary to calculate the area and draw up construction plans according to the department's specifications. Therefore, the timely completion of the work required the assistance of engineering graduates. Without engineering graduates, seeking cooperation from local government engineers, who already have primary responsibilities, could lead to delays. On the other hand, developers from other fields can contribute their knowledge and skills to complement the work, especially during the period from 2020 to 2022, when the government focused on developing the "Khok Nong Na Model" nationwide, in line with the principles of the sufficiency economy philosophy. The interviewee used their work experience to reflect their own perspective, as confirmed in their statement.

"Here, the engineer (CDS) uses their expertise in engineering to design blueprints for the hill and paddy fields. They use their knowledge of geospatial technology to expedite project completion. To effectively report on achievements, a video clip presentation is necessary. A computer science developer can develop professional-grade software, surpassing graduates from other fields. They can also assist in designing modern office websites. ICT graduates assist residents in selling goods online. Accounting CDS utilize their accounting skills by teaching financial management to savings groups, or those responsible for managing funds in community development, such as the Women's Development Fund, as well as the public sector accounting system of the Comptroller General's Department. The developer in the field of law provides guidance using legal terminology. Self-enforceable regulations that do not require the assistance of external legal professionals." (management2)

"The world of work is rapidly changing, with technology being used to enhance productivity. The skills developed in one's field of study add value to community development work. For example, in the field of the arts, developers can design fabric patterns to align with the policies of the DCD, which promotes local textile production. Community development work is a profession that offers a variety of career opportunities." (Management 3)

Supporting people with a specific education qualification in community development or social development is justified by their advanced grasp of the field prior to starting their professional careers. Once they begin their work, they can easily adjust to their community-focused obligations, as mentioned.

"Graduates in community/social development have strong comprehension and expertise about the responsibilities of development officers. They understand the duties and obligations of development officers. Graduates in many fields may not have had the opportunity to learn or gain expertise in community development work beforehand. Upon commencing work, they discover that the job is rigorous and does not allow for days of rest. Some individuals are unable to handle the demands of the job and often choose to either resign or transfer to a different department. Hiring graduates with the right qualifications significantly improves the continuity of community development efforts." (So2)

"Someone without a degree in community/social development may find it challenging to handle the extensive fieldwork necessary for community development initiatives. They can underestimate the frequency and intensity of fieldwork required." (Sci3)

The practitioners' thoughts are consistent with the Head of Community Development District Office interview.

"It is beneficial to hire individuals who have completed their education directly in their field of study, as they have practical experience in implementing projects since their school days (internships). When they arrive to work on community development, they can immediately integrate and continue their work. However, those with other degrees, especially in science, are unqualified to implement projects. When they can change jobs, they do so immediately without feeling attached to the work." (management2)

According to the quantitative research findings, during 2019-2021, the majority—over 40%—of those who completed their education were in the field of science. The next most common fields were political science, public administration, and law. Only 4.14% of graduates worked in community development. Consistent with the results of qualitative research, interviews with individuals who have worked in CDS for more than one year, as well as managers who closely interact with the workforce, indicate that they place significant importance on developing CDS with diverse skills. The DCD's work encompasses a variety of tasks. Having developers from different educational backgrounds who can bring their skills to enhance the work is considered sufficient preparation for the job. Nevertheless, the interview findings also emphasize that those who pursued community development studies had exceptional readiness in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, which they acquired during their university education. They promptly executed the essential duties after initiating collaboration with the community, and they must also acquire additional skills.

## Discussion

In summary of the study findings, it was observed that a majority of candidates who took the examination for the position of CDSs were individuals who had completed their undergraduate studies in fields unrelated to community development/social development courses, accounting for 83.08%. This indicates a significant horizontal mismatch. Qadeer and Fatima (2017) conducted research on the administrative staff of the University of Gujrat in Pakistan and found that 71.1%

of the staff reported that their job responsibilities did not align with their educational background. According to Veselinović, Mangafić, and Turulja (2020) study, which examined a sample group of 4,500 workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was found that 59% of them were not working in jobs that matched their educational attainment. Among this group, only 9.81% of those who had completed a bachelor's degree were working in jobs that aligned with their field of study. We observed two types of mismatches: horizontal match but vertical mismatch, where individuals with a master's degree found employment based on their bachelor's degree, and double mismatch, where there was a lack of alignment both horizontally and vertically. A total of 112 individuals, accounting for 12.89%, fell into these categories. The findings of this research align with the data from the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) (2023), which identifies the issue of vertical mismatch as a significant challenge to the Thai economy. Overeducation, particularly among individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher, is a consistent trend. This group represents the main workforce that is trending towards lower-skilled jobs. Within this workforce group, both individuals with higher and lower skills experience lower income levels than what they should receive, especially those who have completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, Senkrua's (2015) study reveals that there is an increasing trend of overqualification in the Thai labour market. This persistent issue in Thai society, even after nearly a decade, highlights the need for policymakers to reassess the production of graduates to align with labour market demands. It is crucial to ensure that graduates receive an appropriate income or compensation that corresponds to their skills and educational qualifications. Additionally, data from Thailand indicates that graduates with tertiary education have the highest unemployment rate compared to other educational levels (National Statistical Office, Thailand, 2023). If we consider the educational outcomes of different countries, particularly those that are developing, we find that there are high levels of mismatch. For example, Morsy and Mukasa (2019) conducted a study on youth in Africa across 10 countries and found that 52.26% of individuals who completed their education at the tertiary level had higher educational qualifications than their job positions. Sam's (2020) study in Cambodia revealed a rate of 53.90% for both vertical and double mismatches. Meanwhile, the study by Salas-Velasco (2021) in Spain found that the workforce in these two groups is approximately 26.22%.

When considering the alignment or match in the position of CDS, this research found that 4.03% were directly recruited based on their educational qualifications. McGuinness, Pouliakas, and Redmond (2017) conducted a study on the labour force in the European Union in 2014 and found a direct correlation between education level and employment, which aligns with the required skill level by organizations. This research differs from their findings.

Meanwhile, the study by Morsy and Mukasa (2019) in Africa found that individuals with a bachelor's degree worked directly in their field of study at a rate of 47.74%. The study by McGuinness, Pouliakas, and Redmond (2017), which examined the labour force in the European Union in 2014 and found that the workforce aligned with educational qualifications and matched the skill levels required by organizations at a rate of 54%, differs from this research. Conversely,

the study by Morsy and Mukasa (2019) in Africa found that individuals with undergraduate degrees worked directly in their field of expertise at a rate of 47.74%. The analysis revealed a paucity of graduates in the subject of community/social development. To ascertain the necessity of exclusively hiring engineers with degrees in community/social development. It is necessary to ensure that we continue to monitor and review the current activities and procedures. After accumulating more than one year of professional experience. Although reflections from the interviews reveal that there are still two sides to the argument, most CDSs and the head office agree that developing a diverse skillset for employees improves work efficiency. This finding is consistent with Cervantes & Cooper's (2021) study, which reveals that labour market outcomes do not depend on education mismatch, but rather on the management of labour processes that possess the skills to address the aforementioned issues. The highly popular method in Germany, Italy, and the United States is "training." Similar to what the DCD has implemented, the "Pre-Community Development Specialist" course is used before deploying community developers to actual work areas. The DCD is confident that the training program for newly recruited civil servants can successfully develop specific job skills. Therefore, it is not necessary to specify educational qualifications in the specific field of community development/social development, as everyone must pass the training after passing the recruitment examination. The skills obtained from the university are considered general skills that CDS can use to support specific work, as shown in the following diagram.

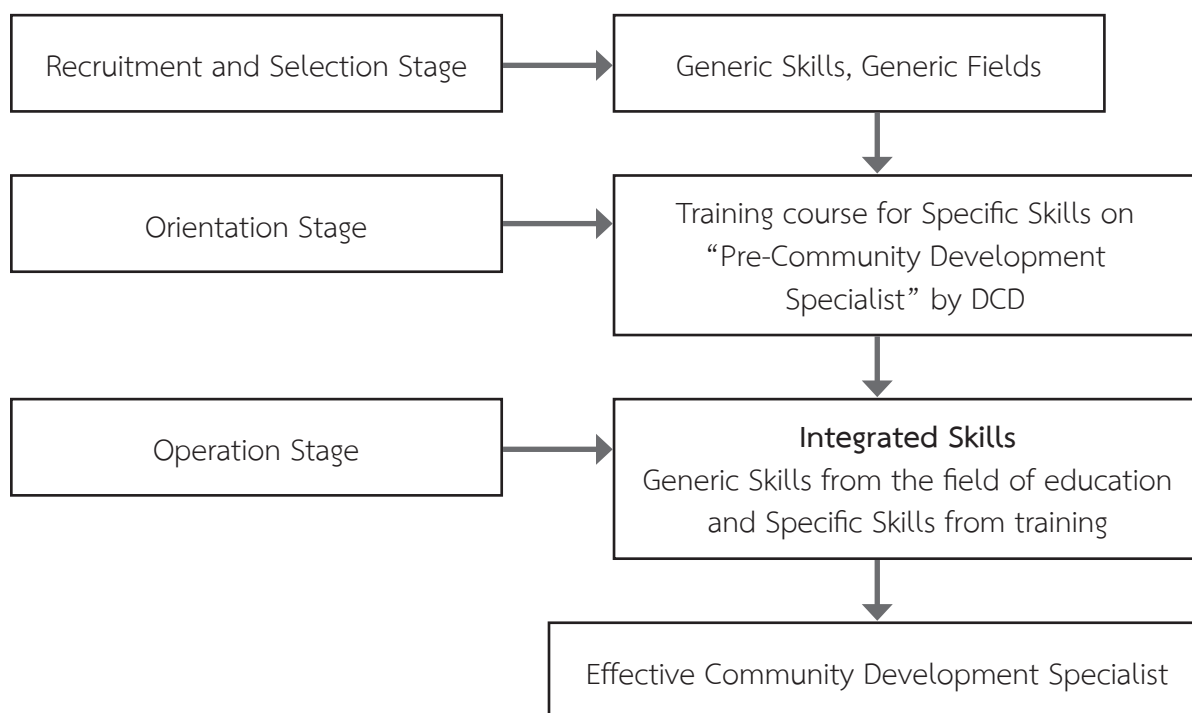


Figure 2 Development process of CDS

Interesting data from interviews with CDSs and the head suggests that non-qualified people who lack of understand the development work before starting and uncomfortable at work have an impact on transfers or resignations. Therefore, to address this issue, we need to conduct additional research to validate the accuracy.

Simultaneously, the community/social development curriculum, which is not a specialized professional curriculum and does not produce graduates for specific government positions, although recruiting CDS from various fields reduces opportunities for those who have directly studied community development to enter this profession, this research indicates that the rapidly changing current work world requires organizations to have CDS with various skills. Therefore, the main responsibility of the community/social development curriculum is to produce graduates according to their own curriculum standards. However, it is important to prioritize students who aspire to enter the CDS profession by providing guidance on the selection process for civil service positions. This process emphasizes the necessary academic knowledge, such as passing the Section A examination of the Civil Service Examination, launched by OCSC, which currently assesses three skills: Thai language, English language, and mathematics. Furthermore, Section B concentrates on community development knowledge, while Section C conducts job interviews. As a result, it is the responsibility of the DCD to train its own personnel to possess the required competencies.

### **Suggestion**

Thai higher education institutions authorized by OCSC offer programs on community development/social development, available at public universities, Rajabhat universities, private universities, and specialized institutes. There are a total of sixty-two programs that have consistently produced graduates for the labour market every year. This information is valuable to lecturers who oversee courses in community development and social development. They can utilize it to assess the effectiveness of their curriculum in preparing students for careers in the civil service as CDS. The curriculum instructor should develop the curriculum or course structure in order to enhance the likelihood of successfully applying for government posts. During the orientation of new students, they should conduct a survey on occupational demands, which will aid in recommending courses. By participating in extracurricular activities, students specifically enhance their academic abilities for community development. Simultaneously, students enrolled in community development/social development courses should consistently review the guidelines for the CDS employment examination. Graduates should also enhance their own skills and abilities to meet the criteria established by the DCD. These processes increase the employability of community development/social development graduates.

Currently, programs of community development/social development have jointly established the "Association for Community, Local, and Social Development,"<sup>1</sup> celebrating its 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary

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<sup>1</sup> The association communicates its activities to members through [https://web.facebook.com/ALCSD.TU/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdc](https://web.facebook.com/ALCSD.TU/?_rdc=1&_rdc)

in 2023, which has members from higher education institutions across the country. The association holds an annual community and social development relations meeting. There are joint activities between students and teachers. Therefore, this association should advocate for the creation of a specific professional curriculum for community and social development and coordinate with government agencies, particularly the Community Development Department, to foster student development, pushing for those eligible to take the CDS exam to only have a professional license. This approach enhances the output of graduates, aligning them with the demands of the government labor market and expanding their employment prospects. Therefore, future research should explore the potential for creating a community curriculum. development/social development in the professional curriculum.

Additionally, the findings of the qualitative research indicate that individuals who enter the workforce without completing a relevant community development/social development program lack the foundational experience of engaging with communities and interacting with residents. In contrast, certain fields of study emphasize working with equipment or in laboratory settings, such as computer science or science disciplines, rather than focusing on people. As a result, individuals in this group are required to engage in extensive fieldwork daily, which often leads to the realization that community development work may not be suitable for them, ultimately leading to their resignation. Therefore, future research should include long-term follow-up to examine the resilience of individuals who have completed community development/social development programs compared to those who have completed other programs, as well as investigate factors contributing to the resignation of CDS.

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